



## Delaware Wetlands



# DELAWARE WETLANDS FACT SHEET

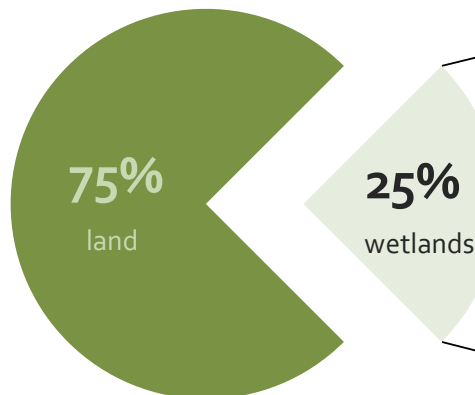
50%

of wetlands have been lost since the late 1700s due to conversion of land to farm fields, development, storms and sea level rise.

Wetlands are part of the foundation of our nation's water supply and are vital to the health of our communities. Wetlands feed into rivers, lakes and streams, reduce flooding, recharge groundwater supplies, remove pollution and provide fish and wildlife habitat. Wetlands vary widely because of differences in soils, location, climate and presence of fresh or salt water. Delaware is a state rich in wetlands that vary from forested seasonal ponds, to highly productive salt marshes, to unique Bald Cypress swamps.

## Delaware Wetland Stats

### Delaware Land Area



### Delaware Property Ownership

80%

of Delaware's wetlands are privately owned

20%

State & Federal

## DID YOU KNOW?

During Hurricane Sandy, it was reported that storm surge was reduced from 9 to 5 feet by wetlands absorbing wave energy in coastal wetland areas.

## What is a Wetland?

In order for an area to be a wetland it must have 3 characteristics:

1. **Water**—In order for an area to be considered a wetland, it must contain water at or near the surface. During the summer and fall months, water may not always be visible.
2. **Hydric soils**—Soils that are soaked with water are called hydric soils. There are many different types, but many of the soils in Delaware are gray in color with spots of orange and red.
3. **Hydrophytic plants**—Plants that have adapted to survive in waterlogged soils are called hydrophytic plants. Examples include: cattails, blueberries, smooth saltmarsh cordgrass, and pond lilies (pictured in 3).



1.



2.



3.

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## What Do Wetlands Do?

- ◆ **Prevent shoreline erosion** by acting as an anchor to hold the soil in place and reduce a wave's destructive energy
- ◆ **Protect us from flooding** caused by big storm events by acting like a sponge to absorb excess rainfall and water
- ◆ **Improve water quality** by acting as a filter, trapping and removing soil and excess nutrients from water runoff before it reaches our rivers and bays
- ◆ **Provide food** to growing fish, birds, invertebrates, amphibians and us, humans
- ◆ **Serve as nurseries** for many species of amphibians, commercial fish and birds
- ◆ **Generate income** to Delaware by providing sellable goods, bringing in nature loving tourists and jobs to residents



A Depression Wetland



A Flat Wetland

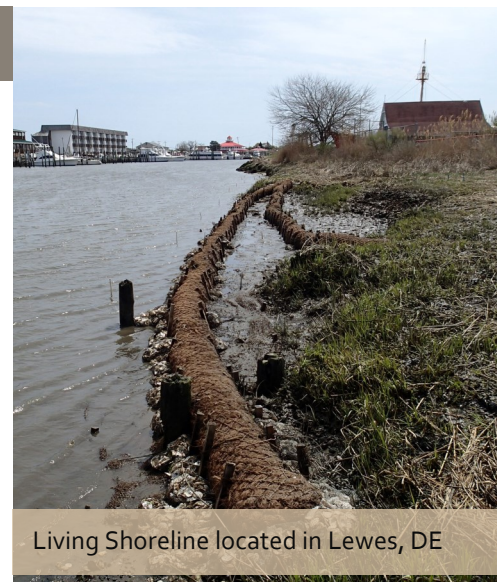
## Where Will You Find Wetlands?

Wetlands make up 25% of the land area in Delaware, and anywhere you stand in the State, you are within 1 mile of a wetland. **They are typically found in the lowest parts of the landscape where water and land meet.** You can expect to find wetlands in or near:

- ◆ Rivers, streams, lakes and ponds
- ◆ Valleys or other low areas with a high water table
- ◆ Flat areas where dense soils prevent water from draining away
- ◆ Low slopes where water breaks out of the ground as springs or seeps
- ◆ Abandoned ditches or stream channels

## What Can You Do to Help Protect Wetlands?

- ◆ **Plant native species** of trees, shrubs and flowers. *For help with plant selection please visit: [extension.udel.edu/lawn/garden/plant-selection-design/](http://extension.udel.edu/lawn/garden/plant-selection-design/)*
- ◆ **Use living shoreline techniques** to stabilize your shoreline instead of hardened structures. *Learn more about Living Shorelines at: [de.gov/livingshoreline](http://de.gov/livingshoreline)*
- ◆ **Avoid wetlands if you are building** or expanding your home or shed
- ◆ **Pick up all litter** and dispose or recycle in appropriate trash containers
- ◆ **Report illegal activities** such as filling, clearing, or dumping in a wetland to the DNREC complaint hotline 1-800-662-8802
- ◆ **Learn More!**
  - Wetlands 101 Videos: [de.gov/wetlands101](http://de.gov/wetlands101)
  - WMAP Blog: [wmap.blogs.delaware.gov](http://wmap.blogs.delaware.gov)
  - Wetland Connection, quarterly e-newsletter: [de.gov/wetlandconnection](http://de.gov/wetlandconnection)
  - Request a WMAP staff member to visit your classroom or meeting
  - Attend the biennial Wetlands Conference: [de.gov/dewetlandsconference](http://de.gov/dewetlandsconference)



Living Shoreline located in Lewes, DE

## Wetland Monitoring & Assessment Program

### Delaware Wetlands



The Delaware Department of Environmental Control's (DNREC) Wetland Monitoring & Assessment Program (WMAP), *also called Delaware Wetlands*, works to provide the public with quality reports on the status, health and function of Delaware's wetlands. The Program collaborates with other government agencies, businesses, non-profits and universities to further wetland research. For more information about the Program or Delaware's wetlands, please visit <http://de.gov/delawarewetlands> or call 302-739-9939.